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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JANUARY 22, 2010
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SAN FRANCISCO MAN SENTENCED TO ONE YEAR IN PRISON FOR SMUGGLING ENDANGERED SPECIES

Smuggled And Then Sold Endangered Fish For Thousands Of Dollars

SAN FRANCISCO - Bai Lin Huang, 49, was sentenced yesterday to one year and a day in prison, and ordered to pay a \$3,000 fine for the illegal smuggling of Asian arowana, an endangered species, United States Attorney Joseph P. Russoniello announced.

Huang pleaded guilty on Aug. 28, 2009, to one count of smuggling and one count of making a false statement. According to the plea agreement, Huang admitted to smuggling in more than two dozen Asian arowana fish on two separate occasions in 2005. Huang also admitted that he deceived both wildlife inspectors and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service agents during the course of the investigation, including providing false documents from China stating that a shipment that contained Asian arowana, disguised as "assorted Koi," sent to Huang was a mistake, when Huang knew that it was not. Huang further admitted to selling Asian arowana on the black market in the past and commanding up to \$2,000 per fish.

The Asian arowana fish, also known as Asian Boney tongue fish, is native to Indonesia and Malaysia. It is classified as "endangered" under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). An individual fish, believed to be a good luck charm in certain communities, can command from \$2,000 - \$10,000 depending on its size and color. It is illegal to trade in this fish without a permit.

The sentence was handed down by U.S. District Court Judge Jeffrey S. White following a guilty plea on one count of smuggling, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 545, and one count of making a false statement, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1001. Judge White also sentenced the defendant to a three year period of supervised release. The defendant will begin serving the sentence on March 4, 2010.

Stacey Geis is the Assistant U.S. Attorney who is prosecuting the case with the assistance of Rayneisha Booth. The prosecution is the result of a multi-year investigation by the United States Fish & Wildlife Service and is tied to other Asian arowana prosecutions this United States Attorney's Office has pursued with the Service.

Further Information:

Case #: CR 09-0473 JSW

A copy of this press release may be found on the U.S. Attorney's Office's website at www.usdoj.gov/usao/can.

Electronic court filings and further procedural and docket information are available at <https://ecf.cand.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/login.pl>.

Judges' calendars with schedules for upcoming court hearings can be viewed on the court's website at

www.cand.uscourts.gov.

All press inquiries to the U.S. Attorney's Office should be directed to Jack Gillund at (415) 436-6599 or by email at Jack.Gillund@usdoj.gov.

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